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ABSTRACT

A national sample of 503 Dutch people aged 15 and over who were accessible by telephone was used in this longitudinal study of reactions to a series of eight broadcasts of "All in the Family." Attitude scales were developed for three independent variables--ethnocentrism, lifestyle intolerance, and parental authoritarianism. Questionnaire items were also developed for three dependent variables--selective exposure, selective perception, and selective retention. Analyses concentrated on three questions: Do the Dutch perceive "All in the Family" as pertaining only to the American context, or is it seen as also pertinent to Dutch society? Is there selectivity in the Dutch exposure, perception, and retention that is related to ethnocentrism, lifestyle intolerance, and parental authoritarianism? What are the uses and gratifications received by the Dutch audience from "All in the Family"? (AA)

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Archie Bunker in a Foreign Culture: A Panel
Study of Selectivity Processes
in the Dutch Television Audience

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Television as cross-cultural communication grows increasingly important as broadcast systems around the world become importers and exporters of television programs. American entertainment series such as Bonanza, Gunsmoke, and I Love Lucy are seen almost everywhere in the world (36). Yet, little is known about the cultural effects of exported TV entertainment shown in foreign lands (37).

A recent international upsurge in the number and popularity of television satires claiming to challenge intolerant or prejudiced attitudes has heightened interest in TV as cross-cultural communication. The British program Till Death Us Do Part, first shown on BBC-TV in 1966, is generally considered the beginning of this type of family television comedy. But the formula became internationally known through the American series All in the Family, which was modelled after Till Death Us Do Part.

The present study addresses the current debate about whether All in the Family has attitudinal effects across national or cultural boundaries. The longitudinal research attempts to trace exposure and perception patterns and the uses and gratifications of the Dutch television audience for All in the Family.

Review of the Literature

From its first American showing in January, 1971, All in the Family has been controversial, with critics both attacking and supporting program producer Norman Lear's claim that the satirical form and content of the show alleviates prejudice (14, 21, 32). The CBS program holds the number one spot in the U.S. audience ratings and is in its fifth season (28). The show's popularity and its controversial dramatic themes have prompted social scientists to renew research in an old area, the role of satire in communication (10).

Several recent research reports dealing with All in the Family or the British prototype, Till Death Us Do Part, trace the origins of related work to an experiment using anti-prejudice cartoons in the late 1940's. The experiment, by Jahoda and Cooper, found that prejudiced subjects "derailed" the cartoon messages in various ways to avoid coming to grips with them (5).

Hastorf and Cantril's field study of selective perception of a controversial Princeton-Dartmouth football game in 1951 is a second classic work in selective audience perception. Students from the two schools who participated in the study saw different games. In essence, they constructed different pictures of the number of infractions and fairness of play, based on their institutional allegiances (13).

These classic studies suggest the problem of selective perception has several dimensions. The football case study focused on the psychological process of actual construction of the reality of an event. The cartoon experiment, on the other hand, pointed up the importance of interpretations placed on messages by their recipients.

There is evidence that beliefs, values, and attitudes are important in the construction of subjective reality (17), but that under some conditions, persons may be receptive to information that is counter to their attitudes.¹ There is also considerable evidence that reinforcement seeking may result in de facto selective exposure to supportive messages. However, other motivations, such as entertainment seeking, are also important in message selection (1). Humor in a public affairs message

may be one of the factors related to the message's success in getting through to a desired audience (26).

Vidmar and Rokeach's cross-national study of "Archie Bunker's Bigotry," which has been widely quoted around the world, suggested All in the Family reinforces rather than reduces racial prejudice (38, 40). Their study tested selective exposure and selective perception hypotheses on a random sample of Canadian adults and a convenience sample of Illinois adolescents (38).

As their basic independent measure, Vidmar and Rokeach assembled a six-item instrument containing questions ranging from opinion statements about the inequality of minority groups to items about the treatment of homosexuals and hippies. The published article does not mention scale analysis, but it appears likely that the single scale dealt with several attitudinal dimensions that should be treated in separate measures (38).

Vidmar and Rokeach interpreted their results as supporting the selective perception hypothesis in the American and Canadian samples. The selective exposure hypothesis -- that frequent viewers are likely to be persons of high prejudice -- was supported only in the Illinois data (38). No explanation for the divergent findings is apparent in the study.

Surlin, in a survey of a sample of All in the Family viewers in Athens, Georgia, found that persons who were high on dogmatism agreed with the character Archie to a significantly greater extent than did other persons of less dogmatism (33).

In 1973, the BBC Audience Research Service studied matched samples of viewers and non-viewers of Till Death Us Do Part. The data suggested some selective exposure to the program similar to the findings in the Illinois study of All in the Family. Persons who were regular viewers of the program were slightly less likely to be "liberal" in their views on social problems than the matched sample of non-viewers. The writers of the BBC report interpreted the data as supporting the traditional idea of reinforcement of prior attitudes about social topics dealt with in Till Death Us Do Part (4).

The Dutch Setting

Most of the studies on problems of selectivity isolate the concepts of exposure, perception and retention and deal with them one at a time. The present work tackles all three in a longitudinal study of a series of All in the Family broadcasts.

The Netherlands is an ideal locale in which to conduct such a study. The country has a modern television system with 96 percent of Dutch households having a

set (29). In addition, ethnocentrism, a youth counter-culture, and changing relationships within the family -- social problems which are major themes in All in the Family -- are serious contemporary problems in the Netherlands.

South Moluccans from the former Dutch East Indies who settled in the Netherlands during and after the struggle for Indonesian independence in 1945-49, and non-whites originally from Surinam, the former Latin American part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, have been the target of some resentment from white Dutch society in recent times (39, 7). Also, a sizeable youth counter-culture, especially in the more urban settings such as Amsterdam, has incurred hostility and distrust of many in the adult society.

All in the Family was first broadcast in Holland in October, 1972. The Dutch audience had been exposed to a similar program produced by the Catholic Broadcasting Organization (KRO) of the Netherlands in 1970. The Dutch program, which had low audience ratings, had been closely modelled after the original British version of Till Death Us Do Part (35).

The Dutch audience, like their American counterparts, liked All in the Family. By the third quarter of 1974, All in the Family, broadcast in prime time with Dutch subtitles, had become one of the top programs on Dutch television and was getting considerably higher ratings

than other family shows (29).

In survey research conducted by the Audience Research Service of the Netherlands Broadcasting Foundation (NOS) in late 1973, a majority of those who had seen All in the Family said they thought the producers of the program had other objectives than just "humoristic entertainment." Most said the program producers intended to do a portrayal or an exaggerated production about a social problem (30). These preliminary data suggest that many Dutch are regular viewers of All in the Family and perceive the program to have a serious purpose.

Theoretical Rationale

This study investigated how the Dutch television audience uses an imported program designed for American culture. The major research questions were directed toward the spirited debate about whether the dramatic message of All in the Family is affected by selective exposure, perception, and retention. Three major questions were dealt with in the research:

- 1) Do the Dutch perceive the American program All in the Family as pertaining only to the American context, or is it seen as also pertinent to Dutch society?
- 2) Is there selectivity in the Dutch exposure, perception and retention of All in the Family

content that is related to ethnocentrism, lifestyle intolerance, and parental authoritarianism?

- 3) What are the uses and gratifications received by the Dutch audience from All in the Family?

In previous work on selective perception, two dimensions of perception have been dealt with interchangeably: the denotative properties of messages (the informational aspects of who did what, where, when, and how), and the interpretational components of the communication (the evaluative aspects of purpose, motive and effects). The present research distinguishes the denotative and interpretative dimensions of perception and retention. Such a distinction may enable a more complete description of the extent of selectivity in a natural television viewing situation.

In a dramatic series such as All in the Family, selective perception may be either a general phenomenon, which occurs through a process of character identification over time, or a topic-bound mechanism, occurring only in relation to certain program themes. If character identification with Archie or Mike occurs, then whatever takes place in the program involving Archie or Mike may be selectively perceived. If character identification does not occur in this way, selective perception may be

demonstrable only in those dramatic content areas that have a thematic relevance to one of the independent variables.

Retention is usually differentiated from perception on temporal considerations. In laboratory experiments, for example, an immediate response to a perceptual question about a message stimulus is usually considered a measurement of perception. A response to a message stimulus which is obtained after considerable lapse of time is labelled as retention. The present study differentiates perception and retention on a similar temporal dimension.

Jones and Gerard suggested that selective retention is likelier than selective perception to be empirically related to attitudes and values, largely because respondents are aware that immediate perception is more easily checked than retention (17). Also, it is conceivable that some sort of "sleeper" effect is operative in shaping long-term memory to fit attitudes and values.

Selective exposure to communication may occur in two forms: seeking messages that are consonant with attitudes and values, and avoiding messages that are discrepant with attitudes and values. In the Netherlands, two national television channels are generally accessible, which makes program seeking less likely to occur than in countries where a greater variety of content is available

at a given time. However, the audience rating for the Dutch channel rises dramatically when All in the Family is being broadcast and drops substantially when the program ends; this suggests that considerable program seeking is occurring.

For selective exposure to be a factor for the Dutch audience two conditions appear necessary: 1. All in the Family's content must be perceived as relevant to Dutch attitudes and society, and 2. selective perception of the program must be minimal, providing the possibility for awareness that the program's treatment of issues is discrepant with attitudes and values held by part of the Dutch audience.

Three themes -- Archie's ethnocentrism, intolerance of divergent life-styles, and his role as an authoritarian husband and father -- are recurrent in All in the Family and have pertinence for contemporary Dutch society. Thus it was hypothesized that there are differences between (a) persons who are high and those who are low on ethnocentrism, (b) persons who are high and those who are low on intolerance of divergent life-styles, and (c) persons who are high and those who are low on parental authoritarianism, on these selectivity factors:

- (1) All in the Family exposure,
- (2) denotative and interpretative perception; and
- (3) denotative and interpretative retention of All in the Family.

Effects research is frequently said to be insensitive to important functions of the media because it ignores the question of why the audience engaged in the communication. Media uses and gratifications sought by the audience may be important intervening variables in communication (19, 23).

Three viewing situations for All in the Family are possible: 1. specific All in the Family content seeking, 2. television medium seeking, and 3. non-seeking, incidental watching. Content seeking is watching All in the Family for a specific reason, such as for entertainment, information, or for interpersonal utility. Medium seeking is watching television at a particular moment just to "kill time," without regard to specific content. Non-seeking All in the Family viewing is inadvertent watching, just because someone else in the room turns the set on independently (16).

Making behavioral predictions based on uses and gratifications is extremely difficult. For example, an entertainment-seeking audience situation for All in the Family may be somewhat analogous to the distraction condition in persuasion experiments (18). If distraction during exposure to a propaganda message is conducive to persuasion (8), and if All in the Family presents a persuasive message in the form of distracting satirical entertainment, then selective perception of entertainment seekers is likely to be minimal. On the other hand, an ethnocentric, intolerant person may be entertained only

by what Archie says, which would tend to maximize selective perception.

The present study, then, in addition to testing specific hypotheses about selectivity, determined whether self-reported uses and gratifications of All in the Family are mediators of the selectivity processes assumed to be linked to viewer attitudes.

METHODOLOGY

Design

A national stratified random sample of 503 Dutch persons aged 15 and over who were accessible by telephone was used in this longitudinal study.² The panel was recruited after face-to-face interviews elicited extensive demographic information from 3000 families randomly selected from the municipal population registry of the Netherlands.³ The final panel sample was stratified proportionately by age and education so that the bias of telephone access was minimized.⁴ Interviewers were from the part-time interviewing staff of the NOS Audience Research Service. Interviewing was always conducted on Saturdays, following a broadcast of an All in the Family episode earlier in the week. Panel mortality was low, reaching only five percent.

A longitudinal design, in eight waves of interviewing, permitted refined measurement of selective exposure and perception on an episode-by-episode basis, and enabled measurement of selective retention in the same study. The design tested the selectivity variables using appropriate events and themes from specific All in the Family programs.

Independent Variables

Attitude scales were developed for the independent variables of ethnocentrism, lifestyle intolerance, and parental authoritarianism that could be used in telephone interviews requiring simple queries. All three scales were developed in accordance with Mokken's probabilistic procedure (27).

Ethnocentrism Scale. Work by Wentholt in the Netherlands suggested that the Bogardus cumulative scale approach could be shortened considerably for telephone interviews about complicated concepts such as ethnocentrism (39). Using the dimension of acceptance of various ethnic groups living in housing next to a respondent -- based on the assumption that the acute housing shortage in Holland made this dimension of high salience -- the authors chose four groups as attitude objects for a Dutch ethnocentrism scale: Turks, South Moluccans,

Surinamers, and Chinese.⁵ The test items assumed this form:

"Happiness with one's neighborhood is greatly determined by who and what your neighbors are. I would like to know your opinion about a number of housing situations that I will now read to you. Suppose the house next to, or across from, you becomes vacant, and suppose a (Turkish family) moves in; would you mind that very much, mind it somewhat, wouldn't you care, or would you like it?"

The scalability coefficient H of .77 indicated that the items produced an extremely strong scale on Mokken's criteria (27).⁶

Lifestyle Intolerance Scale. Using the same form as in the ethnocentrism scale, six attitude objects representing different lifestyles were tested: an unmarried couple, two homosexual males, two homosexual females, two hippies, two women's liberationists, and a group of mentally handicapped persons. A scalability coefficient H of .62 again indicated a strong scale.

Parental Authoritarianism Scale. Five items from a Dutch authoritarianism scale (25) were used: censorship of reading matter, the form of address required of children, the importance of obedience, the strictness of authority required to maintain respect, and the acceptability of pre-marital sex for young persons. The scalability coefficient H of .42 indicated that the items formed a moderately strong scale.⁷

Dependent Variables

Three basic dependent variables were measured in the study: selective exposure, selective perception, and selective retention. Questionnaire items for the selectivity variables were developed in English and translated into Dutch. The items were reviewed critically by the research staff of the NOS Audience Research Service and subjected to refinement in Dutch. The items were then translated back to English for a final review by the authors.

Selective Exposure. Self-reported exposure to All in the Family was measured after each of thirteen episodes of the program. Thus, cumulative exposure as reported week by week and exposure patterns for specific episodes were obtained.

Selective Perception. Selective perception was measured in both specific and general terms. Survey questions were developed from the content of specific All in the Family episodes and from general themes pervading the entire series.⁸ Two dimensions of perception were measured: denotative informational perceptions of actual events in the episodes, and interpretative response to All in the Family.

Denotative perception questions attempted to get at respondents' pictures of an actual All in the Family event.

Examples are:

"As usual, Archie and Mike bickered repeatedly in this episode. Who do you think started it this time?"

And: "Who usually starts the bickering, Archie or Mike?"

Interpretational questions were of two kinds. One set of questions measured interpretations of actual events (evaluation). Another series of questions was directed to interpretations of hypothetical events (projection).

Examples of each type are:

"When Archie and Lionel were talking in the kitchen, did you consider Archie's arguments reasonable or not so reasonable?" and:

"When Archie and Mike disagree on certain things, who is usually right, Archie or Mike?" and:

"Do you think Mike would reimburse Archie for his room and board if Archie asked for it?"

In addition to the question forms above, a set of adjectival opposites was designed to tap general evaluation of two major characters in the show, Archie and Mike.

Selective Retention. Selective retention was measured for one episode of All in the Family. Three weeks after the panel was interviewed about their perceptions of the first episode shown during the time period of the study,

the panel members again were asked the same questions from the selective perception part of the questionnaire for that episode.

Uses and Gratifications Measures. In the final wave of interviewing uses and gratifications questions provided measures of possible intervening variables as well as purely descriptive data on the All in the Family viewing situation. Questions covered (a) content seeking and non-content seeking behavior and (b) self-reported need fulfillment in terms of interpersonal relationships, diversion, personal identity, and surveillance (24, 19).

Statistical Analysis

The Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance with ranks was used in the statistical analysis of the survey data (31). Because of the seriousness of the selectivity hypotheses for broadcast program policy, a decision was made to minimize the probability of Type II error by setting .10 as the level of statistical significance.

RESULTS

The typical All in the Family episode was watched by about 30 percent of the sample during the time of the study. About one-third saw most of the broadcasts and only 25 percent watched none of the thirteen epi-

sodes broadcast during the time of the study.⁹ Higher educated persons were slightly less likely than respondents from middle and lower education levels to watch All in the Family, but this is typical of general television viewing patterns in the Netherlands.

Content Seeking. Slightly less than two-thirds of those in the All in the Family panel who had seen at least one episode during the time of the study said they definitely wanted to see the program each time they watched (content seekers), while the rest only watched because someone else wanted to see the program or the television set happened to be on (incidental watching). Furthermore, the program is broadcast by VPRO, a radical broadcasting organization whose audience ratings tend to be low. All in the Family ratings are quite high by Dutch standards, and they are much higher than the VPRO programs preceding and following All in the Family.

Viewing Motivations. An overwhelming majority of the viewers (83%) said one of the reasons they watched All in the Family was to have a good laugh. About 44 percent watched the program to forget the problems of the day; these persons tended to be heavy television viewers, which suggests that All in the Family merely

fitted into a general pattern of escapist viewing for them.¹⁰ A little more than one-fourth of the viewers said they watched All in the Family to learn something. Slightly less than one-fifth watched the show as a way to be with their families.

When asked why they watched none of the All in the Family episodes, only about 30 percent of the non-viewers said they had no opportunity to watch. Others gave a variety of explanations, ranging from a general dislike of the program to specific comments about the way the race problem was dealt with in the show.

Interpersonal Discussion. More than one-third of the viewers in the sample discussed All in the Family at some point during the time the research was conducted. Of those who talked about the program with others, about a fourth engaged also in serious discussion about some aspect of the show. The others merely had a good laugh with someone about something that had occurred in the program.

Program Purpose. A majority (63%) of the Dutch panel viewers of All in the Family said the program was something more than mere entertainment. Of those who perceived the show as also having a serious purpose, more than half mentioned its treatment of the race problem; one quarter mentioned problems of the family, while the

rest listed a variety of other themes treated in the program.

Dutch Relevance. More than 90 percent of the viewers said All in the Family dealt with situations that exist in reality in the Netherlands. A little more than half of the viewers thought a substantial number of Dutch families were similar to the Bunkers. Most of the sampled viewers (76%) said that All in the Family dealt with situations they might be faced with at some time in Holland. Sixty percent felt highly involved when watching the program.

Majority Perceptions of the Main Characters

When asked to rate Archie and Mike on a list of bipolar adjectives, a substantial consensus of attitudes toward these characters emerged. Archie was described as being funny, mean, impolite, unreasonable, and ignorant. Mike was painted in basically the opposite terms. The two characters were both considered funny and not harmful.

These divergent evaluations extended to the characters' role performances as well. Archie was seen as usually causing the trouble in the Bunker family, and Mike was considered usually right in disagreements with Archie. An overwhelming majority of the viewers felt that Archie's treatment of Edith, his wife, was improper, and that he often made a fool of himself. Mike, though was also

seen as sometimes the cause of trouble, and occasionally making a fool of himself.

The two major characters of All in the Family, then, appear to have sharply divergent images among the Dutch audience, with the two having only humor and harmlessness in common.

Selective Exposure

The selective exposure hypotheses for parental authoritarianism and lifestyle intolerance were clearly supported on the simple exposure dimension, with authoritarian and intolerant subjects less likely to watch the program. Ethnocentrism was unrelated to simple exposure.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Once exposure to All in the Family had occurred during the program season, the extent of actual viewing had no relationship to either of the independent variables studied. Persons high and low on ethnocentrism, parental authoritarianism, or lifestyle intolerance were equally likely to be light or heavy viewers of the program.

All three of the independent variables were strongly related to extent of general television watching in our sample. The more ethnocentric, authoritarian, or intolerant

the respondent, the greater the frequency of television watching. General viewing behavior, then, appeared to be opposite from the selective exposure pattern for All in the Family.

Predominantly substantive or thematic reasons were cited by non-watchers in explanation for their behavior, and viewers of the program were primarily content seekers. These factors suggest that no simple de facto explanation is apparent and that the selective exposure pattern for All in the Family is one of actual avoidance and seeking of the program.¹¹

Selective Perception

Denotative Perception. Events occurring in specific All in the Family episodes were perceived similarly by the Dutch sample, regardless of their ethnocentric, authoritarian, or intolerant positions. For example, in the first episode studied, Archie's niece -- who was visiting the Bunkers -- became friends with Lionel, a young black male living next door to Archie. Early in the episode, Archie and Mike began quarreling. In questioning the panel after that episode, an overwhelming majority of the viewers said Archie had begun the bickering with Mike in that show. No relationship to ethnocentrism, parental authoritarianism or lifestyle intolerance emerged on this item or on any of the other

denotative perception questions asked about succeeding episodes.¹²

When the respondents were asked to generalize about denotative aspects of the entire series some selectivity emerged. Persons who were highly ethnocentric or intolerant of divergent lifestyles were less willing than persons low on these factors to say Archie was usually responsible for trouble in the Bunker family. And highly intolerant or authoritarian persons were more likely to say that Archie usually had the situation under control in the series.

Only panelists who were highly intolerant of other lifestyles were more likely to see Mike as generally initiating the bickering in the series.

TABLES 2 & 3 ABOUT HERE

On questions about the general role behavior of the main characters in All in the Family, then, there was fairly strong evidence that lifestyle intolerance affected perception. Ethnocentrism and parental authoritarianism were related to general denotative perception, but were weaker than the lifestyle variable. A majority consensus on general denotative perception of the series was apparent, but there was sufficient divergence of

perception to support the selective perception hypotheses.

Interpretative Perception. Overall evaluative interpretation of specific events in All in the Family episodes was similar among the viewers, with little evidence of selectivity. On the key dimension of Archie's reasoning, though, perceptions were predictably divergent.

In the episode about the relationship between Archie's black neighbor, Lionel, and Punker's niece, Linda, Archie took Lionel into the kitchen and attempted to explain to him why he and Linda should not see each other socially. While there was majority agreement among the viewers that Archie's argument was not reasonable, persons who were high on ethnocentrism, lifestyle intolerance, or parental authoritarianism were more likely to see reason in Archie's position.

General interpretative evaluation of the entire program series showed greater evidence of selectivity than did the questions on specific episode interpretation. There was sharp divergence on the perceived objectives of All in the Family. Persons high on parental authoritarianism or lifestyle intolerance were more likely to view the program as just entertainment, devoid of serious intent.

 TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

In addition, all three independent variables were significantly related to identification with Archie or Mike. About 30 percent of the viewers said they identified most with Archie; they tended to be high on the ethnocentrism, lifestyle intolerance, or parental authoritarianism scales.

 TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

An overwhelming majority of the viewers said that Mike was usually right in his disagreements with Archie, but the few who said Archie was usually right tended to be high on parental authoritarianism or lifestyle intolerance but not on ethnocentrism. And, again, the dimensions of reasonableness and sensibleness emerged as characteristics which tended to be attributed to Archie by highly intolerant or authoritarian respondents.

 TABLE 6 & 7 ABOUT HERE

This tendency, however, did not appear to affect the evaluations of Mike. Most of the viewers saw Mike as reasonable and sensible; no significant relationships

emerged on any of the independent variables. But, a very small minority, consisting mainly of high authoritarians, tended to see Mike as ignorant and harmful.

When the viewers were asked to extend their interpretation of All in the Family beyond events actually portrayed in the episodes to interpretative projection, virtually no perceptual differences emerged. The one exception to the general finding of projective perceptual similarity was a tendency of the high authoritarians to say there was more to the Linda-Lionel relationship than just casual friendship.

Selective Retention

Three weeks after the initial interviews about the episode involving the friendship between Archie's niece and Lionel, the respondents who had seen that episode were re-interviewed about the program, using the same questions as in the first questionnaire.¹³ The patterns of selective retention were highly similar to the findings on selective perception. No significant shifts occurred in the responses to any of the items.

Denotative retention, as in the data on denotative perception, appeared to be completely unrelated to either of the independent variables. Selective interpretative retention appeared on the question of the reasonableness of Archie's argument with Lionel. No projective retention

was apparent in the data.

Selective retention, then, closely paralleled the patterns of selective perception.

Uses and Gratifications of All in the Family

A majority of the All in the Family audience were content seekers, as opposed to incidental viewers. But the greater the intolerance of divergent lifestyles, the likelier the viewer to say the program was watched just because the television set happened to be on. The other two independent variables were unrelated to content seeking.

To have a good laugh was almost a universal motive for watching the program, with no significant differences emerging at all on this dimension. Escape from the day's problems tended to be cited more frequently by persons high on parental authoritarianism, lifestyle intolerance, or ethnocentrism. But this response appeared to fit a general pattern of escapist viewing for these persons. Companionship with family was cited as a function of All in the Family by viewers high on parental authoritarianism or lifestyle intolerance, but not on ethnocentrism.

The viewers classified as content seekers were subdivided into those who indicated they watched All in the Family to learn something and those who did not mention the learning motive. Of the content seekers, those who were non-learners tended to be higher on the ethnocentrism

scale, but there was no significant relationship to the other independent variables. On the other hand, the higher the ethnocentrism, the more likely the respondents discussed the program with someone.

A primary objective in determining the uses and gratifications of All in the Family, aside from providing a description of the program viewing situation, was to find out whether these factors were mediators of program perception. Key self-reported gratifications from the program -- learning from and discussing All in the Family -- were treated as independent variables for statistical analyses of major perception questions. No significant relationships were found for either learning from or discussing All in the Family and the perception items.

Thus the uses and gratifications -- as measured here, at least -- were, to some extent, related to parental authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, and lifestyle intolerance, but not to the perception variables. It appears, then, that the uses and gratification factors are unlikely to be mediators of All in the Family perception by the Dutch.

Summary. Hypotheses predicting that persons high on lifestyle intolerance and parental authoritarianism would have a different All in the Family exposure pattern from persons low on those factors were supported for simple

exposure but not for frequency of viewing. The highly intolerant and authoritarian panelists showed a clear tendency to avoid the program. Ethnocentrism was not related to either dimension of exposure.

No support emerged for the three hypotheses which dealt with denotative perception of specific program episodes. A wide range of events in the various episodes were perceived with great fidelity by the sample of Dutch viewers.

Only mixed support was received for the hypotheses on interpretative perception of specific episodes, with perception of Archie's reasoning being the major dimension of support. The hypotheses predicting a relationship between lifestyle intolerance and parental authoritarianism and interpretative perception of the general program series were clearly supported, but the ethnocentrism hypothesis received only mixed support. None of the hypotheses was supported on the dimension of projective interpretation.

Using a temporal definition of retention and testing on a single episode after substantial passage of time, selective retention of the program was similar to the patterns of selective perception. Finally, uses and gratifications sought by the audience do not appear to be mediators of All in the Family perception by the Dutch.

Discussion

In most previous studies, selective perception has been conceptualized and measured as a single dimension. This study attempted to separate the concept into several dimensions and to test for them on specific program events and generalized program-character attributes. The empirical results suggest that the refinement was fruitful. The selectivity process for All in the Family was clearly stronger on generalized attributes than on specific episode events. In addition, evaluative interpretation showed stronger evidence of selectivity than denotative or projective perception.

In the public debate about All in the Family, two major questions are pertinent to the research conducted here: What explains the popular success of All in the Family in the Netherlands? And, does the program reinforce or challenge the audience's attitudes about social problems and topics dealt with in the program?

One reason for the show's popularity is, as we suggested in the introduction, that the Netherlands is experiencing societal stresses that are similar to those in America. But, common cultural-social themes are not enough to fully explain why an American Archie Bunker could become a Dutch folk hero, as one Dutch newspaper columnist called him (6). In a television satire broadcast to a foreign

culture in which there are many translation difficulties -- such as the term "dingbat," Archie's favorite name for Edith, and "Polak," the American slang term for Polish persons -- there has to be something more than common societal stresses for the program to have cross-cultural meaning.

Our research suggests that Archie is not only funny and personally involving to the Dutch, but he is also understood. They seem to understand him when he takes Lionel into the kitchen for a lecture about interracial dating, when he talks politics, or when he disparages Mike. Part of this understanding is a result of expert subtitling done by the Dutch and the widespread understanding of English in Holland.¹⁴ Perhaps more importantly, non-verbal aspects of acting in the show -- timing, gesturing, and facial expressions -- are superb, enabling Archie's angry ranting and raving to get through without words.

Arlen, a media critic for the New Yorker, calls Lear's productions the first "media dramas," which go beyond humor and mere topicality to use the authentic "contemporary consciousness" created by modern mass media, mainly television (2). Our work suggests that media consciousness may well transcend national boundaries. In a world permeated by modern mass media, perhaps there is no such thing as an in-house joke, making the American Archie Bunker as real as the Dutchman next door.

The question whether All in the Family reinforces or challenges traditional attitudes of Dutch viewers is more difficult than explaining the show's popularity in Holland. Several previous studies, in both American and British settings, suggested that the reinforcement function is likely. In spite of the fact that our research shows some selective perception, which would seem to argue in favor of reinforcement, another interpretation is possible.

First, our finding of selective exposure is opposite from the result obtained by Vidmar and Rokeach in their American study. In our sample, there was a clear tendency for persons scoring higher on parental authoritarianism or lifestyle intolerance scales to avoid watching All in the Family. Whether these persons are avoiding the show because it holds up a mirror to themselves is not clear, but reasons given for not watching suggest that substantive, rather than de facto, reasons for not watching are dominant. At any rate, a substantial number of persons who might either be challenged or reinforced by All in the Family do not provide it the opportunity to do so as result of selective exposure. In addition, there was a tendency for those higher on lifestyle intolerance or parental authoritarianism to be more likely to say that the program made them uncertain about their own ideas.

In summary, then, this study suggests that All in the Family is not likely to have a reinforcement effect on persons who are high on parental authoritarianism, lifestyle intolerance, or ethnocentrism. First, there is a tendency among highly intolerant and authoritarian people to avoid watching the program. Second, if All in the Family is watched, the observed selective perception processes do not seem to prevent the basic satirical message from getting through, at least to the Dutch.

Table 1: Exposure to All in the Family by average rank^a on parental authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, and lifestyle intolerance

	No exposure	Exposure	H	p
Parental Auth.	243.95	208.05	5.9393	.0148
Ethnocentrism	204.29	213.19	.4115	.5212
Lifestyle Intol.	235.70	205.66	4.2195	.0400
N	83 (19.3%) ^b	346 (80.7%)		

^aKruskal-Wallis analysis of variance with ranks
^bPercentage does not agree with the figure cited in the text because some persons in the panel were not reached at the time measurement of the attitudinal variables occurred.

Table 2: Perception of whether Archie usually has the situation under control by average rank on parental authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, and lifestyle intolerance

	In Control	Not In Control	H	p
Parental Auth.	153.72	123.75	6.4125	.0113
Ethnocentrism	137.38	124.75	1.3391	.2472
Lifestyle Intol.	150.70	122.64	5.6027	.0179
N	45 (15.7%)	212 (82.5%)		

Table 3: Perception of who usually begins the bickering by average rank on parental authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, and lifestyle intolerance

	Mike	Archie	H	p
Parental Auth.	142.7	120.93	1.1673	.2800
Ethnocentrism	129.82	119.52	.2814	.5958
Lifestyle Intol.	160.08	118.42	4.3389	.0373
N	12 (4.94%)	231 (95.06%)		

Table 4: Perception of the nature of the program by average rank on parental authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, and lifestyle intolerance

	Entertain- ment only	Also serious purpose	H	p
Parental Auth.	150.12	117.67	12.0131	.0005
Ethnocentrism	135.63	122.73	2.2164	.1366
Lifestyle Intol.	143.19	118.32	6.6523	.0099
N	94 (36.43%) ^a	164 (69.57%)		

^aPercentage does not agree with the percentage cited in the text because some persons in the panel were not reached at the time measurement of the attitudinal variables occurred.

Table 5: Identification with a program character by average rank on parental authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, and lifestyle intolerance

	Identify with Archie	Identify with Mike	H	p
Parental Auth.	126.03	101.84	7.3884	.0066
Ethnocentrism	116.88	103.04	2.8352	.0922
Lifestyle Intol.	128.97	98.90	11.9100	.0006
N	69 (31.65%)	149 (68.35%)		

Table 6: Perception of which character is usually right by average rank on parental authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, and lifestyle intolerance

	Archie is right	Mike is right	H	p
Parental Auth.	154.35	117.02	6.3651	.0116
Ethnocentrism	137.80	116.61	2.2366	.1348
Lifestyle Intol.	157.02	115.11	7.8957	.0050
N	22 (9.17%)	218 (90.83%)		

Table 7: Perception of Archie's reasonableness by average rank on parental authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, and lifestyle intolerance

	Reasonable	Not reasonable	H	p
Parental Auth.	166.06	122.96	12.1463	.0005
Ethnocentrism	128.08	126.80	.0124	.9112
Lifestyle Intol.	170.48	119.55	16.1355	.0001
N	39 (15.18%)	218 (84.83%)		

SUBSTANTIVE FOOTNOTES

1. For a general summary of research on communication and attitudes and perception in the U.S. and Europe, see (20, 11).
2. The panel was made up of volunteer subjects who were not paid. The sample was also used in general audience research for the Netherlands Broadcasting Foundation. Thus, panel contamination that might have resulted from repeated questioning only about All in the Family was minimized.
3. The initial sample was a multi-stage random sample, in which the gemeente (cities, towns, and townships) was the original sampling unit. After a stratified selection of governmental units, a simple random sample of persons was drawn from the population registry of the chosen units. In the Netherlands every person must register with the appropriate governmental unit within which he resides. The registry of names and addresses is a public document, ideal for sampling purposes.

4. Household telephone subscription is about 66% in the Netherlands.
5. Questions about these attitude objects were imbedded in a group of other nationalities that were thought to be well accepted by the Dutch.
6. The authors used the computer program for Mokken scaling that was developed by J. E. Holl of The University of Amsterdam.
7. As expected, the three independent variables based on the attitudinal measures were positively correlated (using Kendall's τ_c):

Parental authoritarianism-- Ethnocentrism,	$\tau = .15$
Parental authoritarianism-- Lifestyle Intol.,	$= .37$
Lifestyle Intol.-- Ethnocentrism,	$= .38$

All correlations were significant at $p = .001$.

The measure of parental authoritarianism contained a question on the surveillance of sexual behavior of young persons, which is an item that is also related to the characteristics of divergent lifestyles. It is to be expected, then, that the correlation between these measures would be greater than between Lifestyle Intolerance and Ethnocentrism. It seems logical, also to expect that ethnocentrism and lifestyle intolerance would be rather strongly correlated.

8. The themes in the programs varied widely during the study. The first broadcast studied contained strong racial themes, with Lionel, Archie's black neighbor, dating Archie's niece. For a detailed account of the production of this particular broadcast, see (22).
9. Panel sample data were compared to All in the Family audience estimates from the official N.O.S. national diary system. Extremely close correspondence between the two sets of data suggested no panel effect resulted over time from anticipated questioning about All in the Family.
10. Controlling for each of the major independent variables, the extent of general television exposure was significantly related to escapism being cited as a function of All in the Family. An average gamma of .31 was obtained in these tests.
11. A host of other socio-economic variables were analyzed as possible alternative explanations for the selective exposure pattern found here. None of these variables effected the relationships reported here. Another possible explanation, the fact that VPRO, the broadcast association which presents All in the Family on Dutch

television, is a radical group whose programs are often controversial, is more difficult to test fully. The authors, however, reject this explanation for these reasons. First, All in the Family attracts a substantial audience which does not watch other VPRO programs. Second, the show is in its fifth season in Holland, allowing ample time for virtually every TV viewer to hear about the content of the actual program. Third, virtually none of the non-watchers mentioned VPRO as a reason for not watching the program. And fourth, the other broadcast associations attempt to capitalize on All in the Family's popularity by giving prominent display to descriptions of the plot of each week's episode and by using extensive feature material about All in the Family in their weekly program guides. (For example, a June issue of AVRO's Televizier, the program guide of the largest broadcast association in the Netherlands, had Archie Bunker's photograph on the magazine's front cover.)

12. One might argue that a panel effect was responsible for the failure to find support for the denotative (specific) selective perception, in that the subjects may have become aware that we were asking regularly about perception of events, thus causing them to give

extraordinary attention to what actually happened in the program. The fact that no support for the denotative dimension emerged in the first episode studied suggests that the longitudinal results are reliable.

13. The respondents were told that the computer file for the first interview had been accidentally destroyed and that a second round of questioning about the episode was necessary. Interviewers reported no problems with the cover story.

14. Many broadcasting executives from the Dutch broadcasting organizations were interviewed. Several of them commented on the expertness of the subtitling and the quality of the acting in the show.

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